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THE UNCANNY X-MEN

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COCKRUM/WACE

PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS--SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK.

THE TITLE IS SOMETHING OF A MISNOMER THESE DAYS. THOUGH THE MANSION HAS BEEN REBUILT--BETTER THAN BEFORE, COURTESY OF CONSTRUCTION ROBOTS PROVIDED BY LILANDRA--

--THE SCHOOL IS, IN TRUTH, NO MORE.

AS A YOUNG MAN, CHARLES XAVIER HAD A DREAM, OF AN EARTH WHERE HUMANITY AND MUTANTKIND LIVED TOGETHER IN PEACE. TO FULFILL THAT DREAM--

--AND TO PROTECT THE WORLD FROM THE DEPREDATIONS OF EVIL MUTANTS--HE FORMED THIS SCHOOL, WHOSE STUDENTS BECAME THE UNCANNY **X-MEN**, UNSUNG HEROES, FEARED, OFTEN HATED, BY THE VERY PEOPLE THEY WERE SWORN TO SAVE.

THEY BECAME HIS SURROGATE CHILDREN--WHOM HE LOVED WITH ALL HIS HEART.

AND, SINCE THEIR ABDUCTION, HIS NIGHTS HAVE BECOME HAUNTED, HIS HANDS, HE BELIEVES, COVERED WITH BLOOD.

THE DREAM MAY STILL BE GOOD...

...BUT THIS DREAMER IS DONE.

YOU CALL ME, PROFESSOR?

DINNER'S READY, ILLYANA.

GREAT! I'M STARVED!

THE GIRL IS **ILLYANA RASPUTIN**, COLOSSUS' SISTER.

I'VE BEEN EXPLORING THE HOUSE. IT'S ALMOST EXACTLY AS I REMEMBER IT...

...THOUGH IT'S A BIT SPOOKY WITH JUST THE TWO OF US HERE.

MOIRA WILL BE BACK ON MONDAY.

THAT'S WONDERFUL! I LIKE DR. MAC TAGGERT A LOT.

I'M SURE SHE'LL BE PLEASED TO HEAR THAT.

I LIKE YOU, TOO, PROFESSOR. HONEST.

PROFESSOR, SOMETIMES I HEAR YOUR VOICE PERFECTLY CLEARLY, BUT YOU'RE NOWHERE AROUND.

AND I DON'T ACTUALLY HEAR ANYTHING--THAT IS, WITH MY EARS--THE WORDS SEEM TO POP INTO MY HEAD. HOW IS THAT?

AND HOW COME, BEFORE I RETURNED HERE WITH YOU AND DR. MacTAGGERT, I COULD ONLY SPEAK RUSSIAN? I REMEMBER YOU TOUCHING MY FOREHEAD ONE NIGHT AS I FELL ASLEEP AND THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN I WOKE UP, I SPOKE PERFECT ENGLISH!

I TAUGHT YOU, WHILE YOU SLEPT.

I FIGURED THAT--BUT *HOW?!*

WITH MY THOUGHTS.

÷OH!÷

I AM A MUTANT, LIKE YOUR BROTHER PETER. BUT WHERE HE TRANSFORMS HIS BODY INTO ORGANIC STEEL, I READ MINDS. DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT ABILITIES.

DO...DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'M THINKING?

PROFESSOR, AM *I* A MUTANT?

A TELEPATH SHOULD NEVER INDISCRIMINATELY MINDSCAN PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN HIS CARE. YOUR SECRETS ARE SAFE FROM ME, CHILD.

PERHAPS. I'M NOT SURE.

I CAN DO NEAT THINGS, TOO, JUST LIKE PIOTR!

SUCH AS WHAT?

OH... THINGS.

ILLYANA'S THOUGHTS ARE PROTECTED BY AN EXTRA-ORDINARILY POWERFUL AND SOPHISTICATED PSIONIC SHIELD.

IT COULD BE NATURAL--BUT I DOUBT IT. ACCORDING TO MOIRA, SHE WAS ABDUCTED BY A DEMON-LORD NAMED BELASCO, AND HELD FOR SEVEN YEARS IN HIS MYSTIC DOMAIN--THOUGH ONLY MOMENTS PASSED HERE ON EARTH.*

WHAT SHE EXPERIENCED THERE--FOR GOOD OR ILL--NO ONE KNOWS.

I OUGHT TO INVESTIGATE--FIND A WAY TO PIERCE THAT BARRIER--BUT...I NO LONGER CARE ENOUGH TO MAKE THE ATTEMPT. LET MOIRA DEAL WITH HER. ALL I WANT...

...IS TO BE LEFT ALONE.

*X-MEN #160--L.